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Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Additional office accommodation in Geneva for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Forty-third report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Additional office accommodation in Geneva for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007" (A/60/899).

2. The Advisory Committee recalls that in his report on revised estimates in connection with the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/60/537, para. 130) the Secretary-General had indicated that there was a need to identify an additional office building in Geneva to accommodate additional posts for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) owing to the lack of space at the Palais Wilson, where OHCHR is located, and that the estimates contained in that report might be revised subsequently, in the light of this requirement.

3. For the 2006-2007 biennium, the General Assembly authorized the creation of 73 new posts under the regular budget, of which 71 were for OHCHR (resolution 60/246) and 2 were in support of the work of the Human Rights Council (resolution 60/251). Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided additional information on OHCHR posts by location and source of funding, as follows:

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Posts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by location and source of funding

	2004-2005	2006-2007			
Posts	*Total established*	*Additional approved, Geneva*	*Additional approved, New York*	*Additional approved, field*	*Total*
Regular budget	177	73	5	15	**270**
Extrabudgetary	376	91	1	83	**551**
Subtotal	**553**	**164**	**6**	**98**	**821**
Others[a]	—	92	—	8	**100**
Total	**553**	**256**	**6**	**106**	**921**

[a] Includes general temporary assistance, consultants/individual contractors, associate experts and interns.

4. The Secretary-General indicates in his report (A/60/899) that a total of 391 staff are currently working at the Palais Wilson, including 20 who have been recruited against the additional 256 authorized. This has resulted in an occupancy that exceeds by 111 the building's certified capacity of 280 people, in breach of local fire safety codes. It will therefore not be possible to accommodate at the Palais Wilson the additional personnel that are in process of being recruited or remain to be recruited.

5. The Advisory Committee notes that a project team comprising administrative, technical and substantive personnel was constituted to examine alternative solutions and to propose a suitable solution, in consultation with the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Fondation des immeubles pour les organisations internationales (FIPOI). The Committee was informed that among the factors considered to be essential for a practical, workable solution was the proximity of the new premises both to the Palais des Nations, in order to allow OHCHR staff to provide support for the meetings of the Human Rights Council, and to the Palais Wilson to facilitate coordination of the work of OHCHR, as well as sufficient capacity to accommodate any further expansion of personnel that might ensue from future decisions of the General Assembly on the strengthening of OHCHR (resolution/60/1, para. 124).

6. As indicated in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Secretary-General's report, the project team determined that it would be necessary to search for additional office space in the local real estate market. The Advisory Committee was informed that the construction of a building on land already owned by the United Nations had not been considered a viable option at this stage, given the pressing, immediate needs of OHCHR for additional office space. The Committee was also informed that, with respect to long-term space planning, the United Nations Office at Geneva had undertaken preliminary studies and identified two potential sites where a building could be constructed. A comprehensive study would need to be undertaken to determine the feasibility of such a project, which would be subject to the approval of local authorities and require several years to complete.

7. The Secretary-General indicated that after reviewing six existing facilities and a further six properties under development, the project team selected an immediately

available eight-floor structure, located at Rue Giuseppe Motta 48, with a total of 9,128 square metres of space and an estimated capacity of 375 staff. The open layout could be configured to meet the needs of OHCHR in terms of meeting rooms and office space. The building is also located within a relatively short distance of both the Palais des Nations and the Palais Wilson. OHCHR envisages, upon conclusion of the lease agreement, a phased occupancy of the premises, starting in July 2006 with 130 staff, followed by a further 50 staff on 1 January 2007 and an additional 90 staff by mid-2007, bringing the total occupancy of the new building to 270 at the end of the biennium and the occupancy of the Palais Wilson closer to its certified capacity, with some surplus capacity for further expansion of OHCHR.

8. The Advisory Committee notes that the lease agreement would be concluded by FIPOI and the landlord, and then the building would be sublet to the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Committee was informed that the United Nations would be able to freely choose the tenants of the premises, including non-OHCHR personnel. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the initial lease agreement would be for a period of six years, with an option for renewal for subsequent five-year periods. The cost of the lease would be adjusted annually on the basis of the Swiss consumer price index.[1] With respect to the status of the lease agreement, the Committee received confirmation that the official offer was being finalized by the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland on the basis of the terms presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/899) and would be presented to OHCHR by the end of June 2006.

9. Details of the draft agreement, which has been reviewed by the United Nations Legal Liaison Office in Geneva in consultation with the legal office of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, are provided in paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General. The annual lease amounts to SwF 3,625,000 plus utilities estimated at SwF 270,000 (SwF 324,583 per month).[2] Lease payments for the biennium 2006-2007 would be adjusted to take into account the phased occupancy; payments would increase from one third of the annual cost payable for the six-month period from 1 July to 31 December 2006 to two thirds of the annual cost payable for the period from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2006, and the full amount would be payable from 1 July 2007. Costs for internal modifications of the premises for partitioning and creating offices according to OHCHR specifications would be covered at no additional charge up to SwF 1,000,000.

10. Section III of the report of the Secretary-General provides details on the resource requirements for the biennium 2006-2007, which are estimated at $10,451,400, comprising $6,103,000 under section 28E, Administration, Geneva; $2,355,800 under section 32, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance; and $1,992,300 under section 33, Safety and security, of the biennial programme plan for 2006-2007. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided a breakdown of recurrent and non-recurrent costs (see annex I).

11. In paragraph 18 of the report of the Secretary-General, it is proposed to fund the estimated additional requirements from a combination of regular budget and extrabudgetary resources on the basis of the current proportion of OHCHR staff in

[1] The consumer price index for the Canton of Geneva increased by 5.6 per cent between 2000 and 2005.

[2] Equivalent to $268,250 at the United Nations operational exchange rate of 1.21 Swiss francs to the United States dollar for June 2006.

Geneva funded through the regular budget (53 per cent) and through extrabudgetary resources (47 per cent). Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided a breakdown of the cost-sharing arrangement by budget section and object of expenditure (see annex II). The Committee notes that this percentage is applied to additional requirements under section 28E, Administration, Geneva ($4,150,600 net, after deduction of the contribution of the Government of Switzerland), and section 33, Safety and security ($1,992,300). Additional requirements under section 32, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance ($1,592,800 net, after deduction of the contribution of the Government of Switzerland), are funded entirely through the regular budget.

12. With respect to general temporary assistance requirements, the Advisory Committee questioned the need for a dedicated position of building management coordinator during the relocation period (see A/60/899, para. 13) and was informed that OHCHR considered that position essential for a smooth transition to the new premises. The Committee requested and received additional information on the role and functions of the building management coordinator indicating that a P-3 level position was requested for, inter alia, the preparation, planning, scheduling and supervising of work related to the new premises. He/she would also be required to coordinate between OHCHR, FIPOI and the United Nations Office at Geneva to ensure that the transfer to the new premises was in accordance with the established schedule and standards on the use of office space and in compliance with safety regulations. **On this basis, the Committee recommends acceptance of the requested general temporary assistance.**

13. The Advisory Committee welcomes the intention of the Swiss Government to make a financial contribution for additional office accommodation in Geneva for OHCHR, which is outlined in paragraph 17 of the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee notes that the resources provided would amount to up to SwF 2,500,000[3] towards meeting rental obligations until full occupancy of the premises at Giuseppe Motta 48 is reached and up to SwF 1,000,000[4] towards the cost of exterior perimeter security protection for compliance with Headquarters Minimum Operating Security Standards.

Conclusion

14. **The Advisory Committee recognizes the immediate needs of OHCHR for additional office space and the need for a rapid, practical solution and has no objections to the solutions proposed for OHCHR in the report under consideration. The Committee therefore recommends acceptance of the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 22 of his report.**

[3] Equivalent to $2,066,116 at the United Nations operational rate of 1.21 Swiss francs to the United States dollar for June 2006.

[4] Equivalent to $826,446 at the United Nations operational rate of 1.21 Swiss francs to the United States dollar for June 2006.

Annex I

Breakdown of recurrent and non-recurrent costs by budget section and object of expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*Proposed changes*		
	Total	*Recurrent*	*Non-recurrent*
Section 28I. Administration, Geneva			
Other staff costs	197.4	144.0	53.4
Contractual services	163.5	—	163.5
General operating expenses	1 209.0	1 209.0	—
Supplies and materials	22.5	22.5	—
Furniture and equipment	599.1	—	599.1
Subtotal	**2 191.5**	**1 375.5**	**816.0**
Section 32. Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance			
Alterations and improvements	1 592.8	—	1 592.8
Subtotal	**1 592.8**	—	**1 592.8**
Section 33. Safety and security			
Posts	984.0	984.0[a]	—
Other staff costs	130.9	130.9	—
Supplies and materials	42.0	42.0	—
Furniture and equipment	34.7	—	34.7
Subtotal	**1 191.6**	**1 156.9**	**34.7**
Total	**4 975.9**	**2 532.4**	**2 443.5**

[a] Delayed impact of posts in 2008-2009 (at 2006-2007 rates) is estimated at $506,400.

Annex II

Breakdown of cost-sharing arrangement by budget section and object of expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*Estimated additional requirements*				
	Total	*Regular budget*	*Percentage*	*Extrabudgetary*	*Percentage*
Section 28E. Administration, Geneva					
Other staff costs	372.3	197.4	53.0	174.9	47.0
Contractual services	308.5	163.5	53.0	145.0	47.0
General operating expenses	2 304.2	1 209.0	52.5	1 095.2	47.5
Supplies and materials	42.5	22.5	52.9	20.0	47.1
Furniture and equipment	1 123.1	599.1	53.3	524.0	46.7
Subtotal	**4 150.6**	**2 191.5**	**52.8**	**1 959.1**	**47.2**
Section 32. Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance					
Alterations and improvements	1 592.8	1 592.8	100.0	—	—
Subtotal	**1 592.8**	**1 592.8**	**100.0**	—	—
Section 33. Safety and security					
Posts	1 600.6	984.0	61.5[a]	616.6	38.5
Other staff costs	246.9	130.9	53.0	116.0	47.0
Supplies and materials	44.9	23.8	53.0	21.1	47.0
Furniture and equipment	99.9	52.9	53.0	47.0	47.0
Subtotal	**1 992.3**	**1 191.6**	**59.8**	**800.7**	**40.2**
Total	**7 735.7**	**4 975.9**	**64.3**	**2 759.8**	**35.7**

[a] The distribution of the 15 security officer posts is consistent with the established ratio of 53/47: eight posts would be funded through the regular budget and seven through extrabudgetary resources. The higher portion under the regular budget reflects the planned phased roll-out of the posts.